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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

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Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. The report is also submitted in response to Assembly resolution 68/102 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/6. The period covered by the report is January to December 2013.

The report describes the major humanitarian trends and challenges over the past year and analyses a number of thematic issues, including reducing vulnerability and managing risk; transformation through innovation; serving the needs of people in conflict; and humanitarian effectiveness. The report provides an overview of current efforts to improve humanitarian coordination and response and provides recommendations for further improvement.

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I. Introduction

1. Throughout 2013, the United Nations and its partners continued to face major challenges in responding to humanitarian needs generated by conflicts and natural disasters throughout the world. By the end of 2013, the number of people internally displaced by armed conflict and generalized violence had increased to over 33.2 million, the highest figure recorded by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Although an estimated 1 million people were able to return home in 2013, over 8.1 million were newly displaced.[1] The number of people fleeing their homes across borders also continued to increase dramatically. In mid-2013, the global refugee population stood at 11.1 million, 600,000 higher than six months earlier, and the figure was considered likely to increase.[2]

2. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters recorded 334 natural disasters in 2013, which claimed an estimated 22,600 lives, affected 97 million people and caused over US$ 118 billion in damages. Asia continued to be the region most impacted by natural disasters, with almost half (160) of the disasters occurring in the region, accounting for 88 per cent of the number of people killed.

3. The scale of needs in 2013 and the outlook for 2014 continue the upward trend of the last decade. In 2014, 52 million people will be targeted to receive international humanitarian assistance through the inter-agency appeal process and a record $15.6 billion will be requested for humanitarian action in 25 countries. These increasing needs, the international community's collective inability to resolve protracted crises and the convergence of various global challenges have severely hindered the operational and financial capacity of Governments and humanitarian organizations to respond adequately.

4. This underscores the need to change the way Member States, the United Nations and its partners, affected communities and first responders, the private sector, diaspora organizations and other civil society groups collaborate, coordinate and prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises. The process leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit will provide an opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to consider how the international community can better respond to humanitarian situations and what more can be done to prevent them from occurring in the future.

II. Overview of humanitarian emergencies

A. Complex emergencies

5. In the Middle East region, the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to deteriorate rapidly. By the end of the reporting period, the number of people in need had risen to 9.3 million, including 6.5 million internally displaced persons. At least another 2.3 million people had sought refuge in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as Egypt and other countries, creating significant pressure on the economic and social sectors of those countries and on the

[1] Data on disaster-induced displacement for 2013 were not available at the time of submission of the report.

[2] End-of-year data for 2013 were not available at the time of submission of the report.

communities that host many of the refugees. The situation is particularly dire for millions of people living in hard-to-access and besieged areas, many of whom have not been reached with assistance for over a year.

6. In Yemen, sectarian and inter-tribal fighting continued to create displacement and limit returns. In October 2013, new fighting erupted in northern Yemen, where about 300,000 people continued to live in protracted displacement with limited prospects of returning to their areas of origin. In the south, almost all those displaced by the 2011-2012 conflict in Abyan — about 162,000 — have returned home, but face persistent security challenges.

7. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate in 2013. The number of people displaced by demolitions or evictions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, increased from 886 in 2012 to 1,103 in 2013. Despite some adjustments made by the Israeli authorities in recent years, the blockade on the Gaza Strip continues to cause high levels of unemployment and food insecurity, leaving the majority of people in Gaza dependent on aid. Extremely limited movement of people in and out of Gaza through the Erez and Rafah crossings continued to affect the civilian population, including patients awaiting medical treatment.

8. The reporting period also saw the intensification of a number of conflicts in Africa. The security and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic deteriorated significantly in December 2013 when renewed fighting between ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka elements deteriorated into generalized inter-communal violence. An estimated 2.3 million people, more than half the country's population, are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. By the end of the reporting period, almost 1 million people had been displaced.

9. In South Sudan, 1 million people faced acute food insecurity caused by displacement resulting from inter-communal violence as well as seasonal flooding. The eruption of violence in Juba in December 2013 and the subsequent sharp deterioration of the security situation increased humanitarian needs and displaced hundreds of thousands of people both within South Sudan and into neighbouring countries. By the end of 2013, South Sudan also hosted some 220,000 refugees and had absorbed some 1.9 million returnees since 2007.

10. In the Sudan, inter-tribal conflict and sporadic clashes in Darfur displaced close to 400,000 people, bringing the total number of the internally displaced in Darfur to over 2 million. The humanitarian operating environment in Darfur remained extremely challenging owing to insecurity, access constraints and reduced funding. Humanitarian partners could not reach an estimated 800,000 people in areas controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States from within the Sudan. In addition, over half a million Sudanese remained in refugee camps in Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

11. In Mali, 3 million people were affected by food insecurity by the end of 2013. Approximately 137,000 displaced people returned to the north despite prevailing insecurity, inter-ethnic violence, food scarcity and the lack of basic social services. At the end of 2013, there were more than 254,800 internally displaced persons in Mali and over 167,700 Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger.

12. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at the end of 2013 there were nearly 3 million internally displaced persons — many displaced multiple times. Almost

430,000 Congolese were living as refugees and asylum seekers in neighbouring countries, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself continued to host some 260,000 refugees, including over 65,000 people arriving from the Central African Republic since December 2012. Food insecurity affected 6.7 million people and half of the children under the age of 5 remained chronically malnourished, including in more peaceful areas of the country.

13. In Somalia, for the first time in five years and despite ongoing fighting in some parts of the country, the number of people in need of life-saving assistance decreased — from over 1 million to 857,000 — reflecting modest gains in food security. However, some 2 million people continue to live on the verge of food and nutrition insecurity and require support. Malnutrition rates remain among the highest in the world, with one in seven children under the age of 5 estimated to be acutely malnourished. An estimated 1.1 million people are internally displaced and nearly 1 million Somalis continue to live in neighbouring countries as refugees.

14. In the Asia-Pacific region, inter-communal tensions and violence spread in Myanmar from Rakhine State to other areas of the country, most notably to Meiktila, where 44 people were killed and over 12,000 displaced in March 2013. Over 140,000 people remain displaced in Rakhine State, and 100,000 people in Kachin following renewed clashes in October-November and continuing difficulty in accessing areas beyond the Government's control.

15. In Afghanistan, more than 124,000 people were newly displaced in 2013 by the ongoing conflict, bringing the total number of displaced people to 631,000. In Pakistan, approximately 1 million people remained displaced in Khyber Pakhtunkwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. In 2013, more than 108,000 internally displaced returned home with assistance from the Government. In addition, 1.6 million Afghan refugees reside in Pakistan, constituting the world's largest protracted refugee situation.

16. In the Philippines, fighting between armed groups and violent clan feuds continued in Mindanao, where over 140 people were killed and 150,000 displaced. Approximately half of the displaced returned home in late 2013. The lack of available land for resettlement and relocation forms a major constraint for the remaining internally displaced persons.

B. Disasters associated with natural hazards

17. Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) made landfall in the Philippines on 8 November, resulting in the largest loss of life from a natural disaster in 2013. Over 14 million people were affected, including 5.4 million children. Government sources reported at least 6,200 deaths and 1,700 people missing. Over 4 million people were displaced and over 1 million homes were damaged, half of them destroyed. Haiyan came less than one month after an earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale which hit the nearby island province of Bohol.

18. In Pakistan, monsoon flooding affected approximately 1.5 million people, a significant decrease from previous years (18 million in 2010 and 5 million in 2011 and 2012). In the Islamic Republic of Iran, an earthquake impacted western Balochistan in April, followed by a major earthquake in Balochistan in September, affecting 215,000 people and killing over 400.

19. In the Sahel region, 11.4 million people remained food insecure while 5 million children were at risk of malnutrition. Vulnerable communities continued to feel the impact of the 2012 food and nutrition crisis, including high levels of indebtedness and the need for some people to sell what few assets they still possessed. Despite cereal production surpluses in most of the Sahel countries, a combination of factors, including chronic vulnerability to repeated shocks, have left millions of people unable to recover from the 2012 food and nutrition crisis. Close to 500,000 people were affected by floods in the Sahel, an estimated 233,000 of them in Niger.

20. During 2013, Southern Africa experienced several major disasters, causing at least 191 deaths and affecting an estimated 519,000 people. Heavy rains caused flooding across Mozambique, while Tropical Cyclone Haruna made landfall over southwest Madagascar. The Seychelles declared a state of emergency in three districts owing to floods and landslides. A combination of floods, drought, cyclones and locust/army worm infestation led the region to experience one of the worst food insecurity situations in years, affecting an estimated 15 million people.

21. Haiti continued to recover from the multiple shocks suffered in the last few years, but critical needs remained, with an estimated 3 million people with chronic and acute needs requiring life- and livelihood-saving interventions. Following the 2010 earthquake, over 146,000 people remained displaced, living in 271 displaced persons' sites. Many of the sites are located on private land, so people are at risk of forcible eviction. In 2013, cholera infection rates continued to decrease to some 58,500 recorded cases, compared to 101,700 in 2012.

III. Progress in the coordination of humanitarian action

22. In 2013, the United Nations and its partners continued to improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action, including through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee transformative agenda.[3]

Humanitarian programme cycle

23. An important element of the transformative agenda was the introduction in 2013 of improvements to the humanitarian programme cycle concept. The programme cycle is designed to strengthen the way in which humanitarian actors work collectively, including with and in support of Governments, to help meet the needs of people affected by natural disasters and conflict. The programme cycle consists of five elements: needs assessment and analysis; strategic response planning; resource mobilization; implementation and monitoring; and operational review and evaluation. Coordination and information management are key enablers for each of these steps, as effective, strategic and accountable humanitarian action is based on assessments and analysis of needs.

[3] Although fully supportive of the transformative agenda process, in order to maintain their independence, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which are not members of, but standing invitees to, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, are not signatories to the 2012 transformative agenda protocols.

24. In 2013, particular emphasis was placed on improving the first two elements of the cycle, needs assessment and analysis and strategic planning. The humanitarian needs overview aims to better inform joint planning and provides a comprehensive analysis of a crisis and the prioritization of needs. Agencies or clusters undertake separate assessments and the data are then aggregated and analysed to produce a shared picture of the humanitarian situation. Assessments are undertaken in consultation with the affected Government, international, national and local humanitarian organizations and people affected by the crisis.

25. On the basis of this humanitarian needs overview, a strategic response plan is developed. The strategic response plan is intended to be a "road map" for humanitarian organizations to identify strategic objectives and guide project and programme design: it outlines what the humanitarian country team is trying to achieve, where the work will be carried out and what resources are required. It also serves as the overall framework for collective response monitoring.

26. The programme cycle is not a new concept. For protracted crises, most of the above elements were featured in the annual consolidated appeals process and published in country-specific appeal documents. The new approach to the cycle involves a separation of these elements into distinct, more manageable and better-supported processes and products in order to improve the quality of each element and to ensure that the cycle is a continuous process during the year. It ensures a more inclusive and consultative approach which results in improved support to countries in meeting humanitarian needs and greater accountability to people affected by crises. During the period under review, the revised programme cycle approach was used in 22 countries.

27. Over the coming year the humanitarian programme cycle will continue to be refined and the humanitarian needs overviews and strategic response plans adjusted on the basis of lessons learned during 2013. Preliminary feedback indicates that the revised humanitarian programme cycle resulted in stronger needs analysis and more focused strategic response plans, although the quality of the processes and outputs varied. The prioritization of needs in some countries was also challenging, particularly in places marked by high levels of poverty. The elements found to be in need of strengthening include the quality of the data used to underpin the humanitarian needs overview; inclusion of the different needs of women, girls, boys and men and persons with disabilities throughout the programme cycle; making protection concerns more operational in the strategic response plans; and inter-cluster coordination mechanisms. Further operational guidance is also required on how to engage local non-governmental organizations and foster participation by people affected by crisis throughout the cycle.

Information management

28. Poor baseline data, insufficient consolidation and weak analysis, the inability of different actors responding to a crisis to exchange information quickly and information not being sufficiently used to inform decision-making can be detrimental to effective humanitarian action. Information management is therefore critical to saving lives; without it, people cannot access services or make the best decisions for themselves and their communities, and Governments and humanitarian organizations will make decisions without an accurate overview of the situation. This has an impact on how, where and to whom assistance and protection are provided.

29. During the reporting period, humanitarian agencies and partners continued to find ways to better harness information and technology to benefit people affected by crises as well as responders. Greater attention was given to communicating with communities through all available channels, including radio, television, text messaging and newsletters, to deliver vital information and ensure that responders receive information from affected communities. For example, in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat worked with a global and national network of telecommunications providers and humanitarian partners to reach some 1.2 million people with life-saving information and to open channels of communication for vital feedback on the provision of assistance.

30. With the expansion of technology, the availability and volume of information in crisis situations has grown exponentially. For this information to be useful to the humanitarian community, it must be collected from a wide array of sources and transformed from raw data into information that decision makers can use quickly to help save lives. Pilot projects are under way to make relevant global and operational data more easily available to humanitarian decision makers. In 2013, ReliefWeb Labs launched the Humanitarian Data Exchange project, which aims to create a platform where information collected from multiple sources can be aggregated, stored and transformed into useful data for the humanitarian community. The project is working to create a future where humanitarian data are available in real time, from any device and location, so that Governments, humanitarian organizations and affected people can all work from a common knowledge and information base.

Understanding the different needs of affected people

31. Member States and humanitarian organizations need to ensure that preparedness efforts, humanitarian action and financing meet the distinct needs and priorities of different segments of the population according to sex, age and disability. A number of steps can be taken to improve humanitarian action for all and strengthen accountability to people affected by crisis.

32. Given the different needs, capacities, challenges and experiences of women, children, adolescents, persons with disabilities and older persons, these groups' participation in decision-making processes is essential to ensure that humanitarian programming is appropriate and effective. In 2013, humanitarian actors increased their efforts to involve different segments of the population in decision-making processes. For example, some cluster project implementation committees required 50 per cent representation of women. Making greater use of community capacities and structures such as women's associations and youth groups will help to improve participation in decision-making and in turn contribute to the development of durable solutions, strategies and responses.

33. This inclusive approach should be integral to all phases of the humanitarian programme cycle. Needs identification and prioritization processes should be based on community participatory methodologies that adequately and equitably engage women and men of all ages, including persons with disabilities. The practice of systematically collecting, analysing and using sex- and age-disaggregated data and prioritizing gender and age analysis is fundamental in this respect. While the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability has progressed, more

effort is required to ensure that disaggregated data are maintained throughout the collation process, subjected to analysis and used in programme planning.

34. In 2013, Inter-Agency Standing Committee partners continued to take steps to implement the Committee principals' commitments to improving accountability to affected populations.[4] This included the deployment of a coordinator and the launch of the first action plan for accountability to affected populations in the Philippines. This resulted in programming adjustments being made by various United Nations agencies and non-governmental partners on the basis of suggestions and concerns raised through consultations with women, girls, boys and men of all ages and persons with disabilities. In going forward, more needs to be done to collectively clarify what accountability to affected populations means practically at the field level in order to avoid overlapping mechanisms and an inefficient use of resources. It will also be important to ensure that initiatives integrate existing national and local accountability mechanisms and provide more opportunities for the voices of all affected people to be heard in the programmes and coordination structures designed to serve them.

Protection

35. Humanitarian action is based on a number of principles, including humanity, which requires the provision of life-saving assistance, protecting people from violence and upholding their rights. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee principals adopted a statement on 17 December 2013, which affirms that the protection of all persons affected by conflict and disaster, and those at risk, must inform humanitarian decision-making and response. The statement complements and reinforces the "Rights up front" action plan, which aims to strengthen United Nations action to protect people, wherever they may be, from serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

36. A central component of protecting people is understanding their rights and different needs, particularly those of certain groups that may be particularly vulnerable to protection risks, and helping to ensure that crises do not result in further vulnerability or threats to their rights. For example, displacement can lead to people losing their personal documentation, at times resulting in a loss of "legal personality" that can hinder people's access to certain services and limit their freedom of movement. The destruction of schools disrupts education and places children at greater risk of other violations. The loss of community support structures can result in increased isolation of people with disabilities, exposing them to further risk of exploitation and abuse. Crises are also highly disruptive to family and social structures and create new financial demands. Adolescent girls often bear the brunt of these burdens and can be forced into early marriage or sexually abused or exploited, often resulting in dangerous early and unwanted pregnancies. Changes in gender roles resulting from disasters can also raise tensions at the household level and increase the risk of gender-based violence.

37. There are a number of ways that Member States and humanitarian organizations can strengthen the protection of people affected by crises. National authorities, communities and humanitarian organizations can plan and prepare for

[4] In December 2011, the principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed five commitments on accountability to affected populations: leadership, transparency, feedback and complaints, participation and design, monitoring and evaluation.

crises in a way that reduces the risk that people's rights may be violated or their ability to exercise their rights compromised. These efforts can include developing preparedness and contingency plans in consultation with civil society groups and enacting appropriate laws and policies focused on vulnerable groups. In the aftermath of a disaster, the quick restoration of basic services such as education can protect children and adolescents from being exposed to the most acute physical and psychosocial risks, including trafficking, gender-based violence, child labour and recruitment. The provision of sexual and reproductive health services, including emergency reproductive health kits, can help assure safe deliveries. Dignity kits can provide culturally sensitive basic necessities for women and girls of reproductive age, and items such as flashlights and whistles can be used to alert others to a threat of gender-based violence.

Humanitarian financing

38. In 2013, 95 countries, as well as numerous multilateral and regional organizations, private sector organizations and individuals, contributed a total of $14.4 billion in funding to multilateral inter-agency response plans and complementary humanitarian action.[5] This was an increase of $1.6 billion from 2012, largely owing to the magnitude of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

39. During the reporting period, Member States and the private sector contributed $474 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund, the highest-ever annual total. These funds enabled the Emergency Relief Coordinator to allocate $482 million for urgent humanitarian response in 45 countries and territories. More than 65 per cent of the funding was used to respond to complex emergencies, 20 per cent to natural disasters and 14 per cent went to other protracted humanitarian emergencies.

40. Country-based pooled funds — common humanitarian funds and emergency response funds — received a total of $419 million from 20 Member States and private donors and allocated $397 million to complex emergencies and natural disasters in 17 countries. Country-based pooled funds played a key role in promoting coordinated humanitarian response across a wide range of partners, with 59 per cent of the funds supporting national and international non-governmental organizations. The funds also facilitated early action by humanitarian partners, which helped to mitigate the risks of crises deepening and reduced the longer-term costs of assistance. Discussions are also ongoing on how the country-based pooled funds can appropriately and strategically support resilience initiatives.

41. While the Central Emergency Response Fund has been crucial in supporting coordinated humanitarian action and strengthened leadership in nearly every major emergency worldwide, with needs and funding requirements continuing to increase, it is essential that the resources channelled through the Fund be utilized in the most strategic manner. To continue to strengthen the strategic use of the Fund, humanitarian coordinators and humanitarian country teams need to take a number of factors into account in allocating resources, including timing; intended impact; implementation capacity; the number of projects supported; geographical priorities, coherence and complementarity with other funding streams; and how the funds can be used to secure additional funding for the response to a crisis.

[5] As reported to the Financial Tracking Service (http://fts.unocha.org/) as at 14 March 2014.

42. The growth of cash-based programming — the distribution of cash or vouchers, instead of goods or services, to people in need — may also impact the financing and delivery of assistance in the future. Cash-based programming has most often been considered as an alternative to food aid, but is increasingly being used in almost all humanitarian sectors, in different settings (urban, rural or camp) and in all phases from preparedness to relief and development. Where appropriate, cash-based programming has the potential to be a cost-effective intervention that can more accurately reflect the needs, capacities and priorities of crisis-affected communities.

IV. Towards more inclusive, interoperable and effective international humanitarian action

43. Preparations are under way for the World Humanitarian Summit to be held in Istanbul in 2016. This initiative of the Secretary-General comes at an opportune time, with widespread recognition that the humanitarian landscape has changed tremendously over the past few decades. The Summit will provide an opportunity for a global consultation to help build more inclusive and diverse humanitarian action and set a common humanitarian agenda for the future. Four themes will serve as broad categories to guide the extensive and inclusive consultations: reducing vulnerability and managing risk; transformation through innovation; serving the needs of people in conflict; and humanitarian effectiveness.

A. Reducing vulnerability and managing risks of humanitarian crises

44. The 2014 global humanitarian appeal targets 52 million people to receive international humanitarian assistance, yet this is only a fraction of the total numbers of people affected by conflicts and disasters, most of whom are not assisted through inter-agency appeals. Over the last decade the global funding requirements of inter-agency appeals have increased by 430 per cent and protracted or recurrent crises have become the norm. In 2012, of the 22 countries with an inter-agency appeal, 21 had experienced at least one other crisis in the previous 10 years. Eight of those countries had had eight or more crises during the same period. A convergence of global trends, including climate change, population growth, unplanned urbanization and food and water insecurity, are eroding people's ability to cope with shocks, making crises more protracted and more recurrent and undermining sustainable institution-building and development. The international humanitarian system is being stretched beyond what it could ever deliver, and caught in the gap are millions of people who fluctuate between states of urgent need for assistance and protracted vulnerability. Continuing to fund crisis response without investing more in managing the underlying risks is not sustainable.

45. Recent reports, including the World Development Report 2014, the study entitled *Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow: Managing the Risk of Humanitarian Crises*, issued by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the study commissioned by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and prepared by the Overseas Development Institute, *Dare to Prepare: Taking Risk Seriously*, provide further evidence and deliver the same message: a fundamental shift is needed towards an approach that not only improves the response to humanitarian crises but

anticipates, prevents and mitigates their recurrence. A change in the "business model" can only be achieved through investment in building national and local capacity to manage crisis risk; humanitarian and development organizations overcoming and transcending the institutional divide that separates them; adequate financing; and leadership and commitment by affected Governments, donors and humanitarian and development organizations.

46. National and local capacity are critical to successful risk management. New partnerships and incentives at the local level to jointly analyse and tackle risks, share early warning information and establish reliable triggers for action are helping to save lives. In India, early action ahead of Cyclone Phalin in October 2013 averted a major disaster. Thanks to effective risk management by national authorities, more than a million people were evacuated from affected areas. Only 38 casualties were reported, compared to over 10,000 lives lost during a similar cyclone in 1999.

47. In concert with national authorities, the United Nations and relevant partners need to strengthen joint planning and coordination of programmes and resources to provide predictable, reliable support to national capacity development for preparedness. This support should recognize the comparative advantage of each organization. Strengthening national preparedness can only succeed if humanitarian and development actors coordinate their resources, skills and action to support national and local capacity.

48. In 2013, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, together with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations Development Group, finalized the Common Framework for Preparedness, which recognizes that national and local governments have the lead role for preparedness and should be supported by the international community where this is consistent with humanitarian principles and human rights norms. The successful implementation of the Common Framework will require continued leadership and engagement from national Governments, donors and humanitarian and development organizations.

49. Humanitarian organizations are working with Governments to build their capacity to manage crisis risk; but they cannot do it alone. It requires humanitarian and development communities to transcend the institutional barriers that separate them. Working in these silos can inhibit the development of programmes that help people manage risk and can prevent a strategic approach being taken to meeting people's immediate needs and at the same time addressing the underlying risks and vulnerabilities which will help to reduce needs in the future. Humanitarian and development actors need to agree on common risk-management and resilience objectives, achievable through joint analysis, planning, programming and funding.

50. Investment in preparedness — not only through funding, but in the implementation of preparedness programmes — has the potential to transform the scale and approach of humanitarian action. The recent studies by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Bank and the Overseas Development Institute provide evidence of the benefit-to-cost ratio of emergency preparedness and point to a fundamental flaw in the financing architecture. Less than 0.5 per cent of the $3 trillion in development commitments in the past 20 years has funded prevention and preparedness.

51. New funding mechanisms are not necessarily required, but funding based on objective and shared assessment of risks is essential. It is also important to explore

innovative risk-sharing mechanisms such as insurance, risk pooling and risk mutualization. In Haiti, the Microinsurance Catastrophe Risk Organization, supported by Mercy Corps and other partners, is helping to protect community entrepreneurs from disaster risk. In the Pacific region, the World Bank risk insurance pilot programme is for the first time using scientific measurements such as earthquake magnitude indexes as the basis for a rapid insurance mechanism for small island countries.

52. Finally, leadership and commitment by national Governments and donors to preventing and mitigating the risk of crises is critical. Too often, managing risk outside of crisis is not given priority by Governments or organizations that could support it. It is still easier to respond to actual emergency needs than to invest in risk management over the longer term in the absence of a crisis, particularly where Governments face competing priorities. As a result, national development plans too often neglect addressing the underlying risks that can lead to humanitarian crises. Insufficient focus is given to analysing and addressing the underlying factors that lead to conflict. Funding is often not directed to the countries most at risk. Governments and humanitarian and development organizations do not systematically make the best use of the information available. Ultimately, inertia and inaction in the face of known risks are the greatest disaster risks in themselves, so a change in approach will not be possible without strong leadership at the global, national and organizational levels.

53. The shift towards an anticipatory approach to disasters ultimately requires Governments — affected countries and donors — and all relevant stakeholders to make preventing future humanitarian crises a priority. As the international community prepares for post-2015 development and disaster risk reduction frameworks, and the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, it will be important to recognize that development cannot be sustainable if the risk of crises is not taken into account and proactively addressed as a joint priority.

B. Transformation through innovation

54. In the last decade, the international community has faced rapid social, technological, environmental and economic changes. In evolving with these changes, the humanitarian action of the future will look very different from that of today. A new approach is required to adapt to the changes and bring about improvements in humanitarian action. Member States, the United Nations and its partners need to constantly question the way the humanitarian system works, look outside the international system for ideas and allow for investments in new ideas and solutions that can support a rapid and effective response. Innovation should be embraced by the humanitarian community.

55. Already, innovative approaches are being driven by Governments and people affected by crisis — such as the text messaging-based post-disaster early warning system for disease in the Philippines. A number of donors are increasing their funding to areas of work which promote innovation and many organizations are creating innovation units to improve the way they learn and adapt their practices. For example, UNICEF has 12 innovation labs globally and UNHCR has a dedicated innovation team that supports five labs and 20 innovation fellows globally.

However, there is still only limited donor support and few alternative sources of financing to develop innovative approaches to humanitarian work.

56. New types of partnership are also being developed. Recent examples of public-private projects include collaboration with the Groupe Speciale Mobile Association (GSMA), the mobile-phone industry association, to map where cell phone coverage was available after Typhoon Haiyan; the World Food Programme's partnership with MasterCard to provide cash transfers for food and other basic services; the Ikea Foundation's support to UNHCR Innovation; and the displacement tracking matrix designed by the International Organization for Migration, which utilizes advanced technology from private sector partners to identify the highest priority areas for interventions within displaced communities. A more rigorous process of identifying areas where the humanitarian community, the private sector and other actors have a common interest in collaborating will be an important step in finding new ways to solve humanitarian challenges.

57. The key to successful innovation is a strong evidence base and proof that an idea is not just new, but better. In addition to greater investment in basic research, monitoring and evaluation, more collaboration with research institutions and better sharing of results across organizations will help identify the innovative ideas with the greatest potential impact. Investment in research and development to drive innovation is a way to meet growing and changing needs.

58. Ideally, innovative practices should draw on the knowledge of affected people to develop locally sustainable solutions. From the outset, projects must be designed through a community-centred lens and should be implemented in line with humanitarian principles so that they are inclusive, accessible and uphold the "do no harm" approach. There is a need to consolidate and develop both ethical guidelines and operational safeguards to address issues of exploitation, privacy, community participation, accountability and unintended negative impacts.

C. Serving the needs of people affected by conflict

59. While the past decade has been marked by an increase in devastating natural disasters, complex emergencies have remained at the centre of humanitarian action. Between 2002 and 2013, the United Nations and its partners launched almost 340 humanitarian appeals for a total of over $96 billion. Of that amount, $83 billion was requested to assist people affected by conflicts and approximately $13 billion to address the consequences of natural or other disasters. At the end of 2013, each of the 10 largest consolidated humanitarian appeals involved situations of armed conflict. Most of these crises have now been going on for over five years.

60. Ultimately, parties to a conflict bear the primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of people in areas under their control. Their compliance with their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law is paramount to ensuring the protection of people affected by conflict. However, too often these obligations are ignored or flagrantly violated.

61. As a result, the human cost of conflicts is staggering. The direct consequences of conflict for women, girls, boys and men include deaths, wounds, disabilities, torture, cruel and inhumane treatment and gender-based violence. However, conflict also limits or prevents people's access to basic services, undermines their ability to

generate sustainable livelihoods and destroys or damages infrastructure. It is widely recognized that conflict sets back the development of a country by decades, including critical institutional developments such as justice systems, leading to prolonged suffering and creating further vulnerabilities to disaster risks. While the impacts are visible and obvious, work should continue to improve casualty recording.

62. Many of the key features of conflict are recurring, last for decades and serve as sad reminders of the need for principled humanitarian action in conflict settings. A few of them are considered in more detail below.

Internal displacement

63. For millions of people, fleeing their homes and seeking safety within and across borders has become their only option when seeking to survive violence and is only the beginning of an ordeal that may last for years or even decades, marked by trauma, impoverishment and reduced access to basic services. While the right to freedom of movement and to leave one's country and seek asylum must always be respected, displacement should never be accepted as inevitable. The majority of those displaced by conflict are often unable to return for years, sometimes never, and therefore require sustained and consistent support.

64. Some 80 per cent of the 28.8 million people who were estimated to be internally displaced owing to conflict and violence in 2012 lived in urban and non-camp settings, often residing with host communities. Yet, internally displaced persons living in camps or other "gathered" settings remain more likely to receive protection and assistance. Affected countries and humanitarian and development organizations must do more to meet the needs of internally displaced persons in urban and non-camp settings. "Combined" approaches to provide protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and host community members, as well as targeted interventions to address the specific assistance and protection needs of the internally displaced must be strengthened, including through respect of international humanitarian law and human rights law and greater application of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. With national Governments in the lead, all actors, including the international community, must make greater efforts to achieve durable solutions that ensure that internally displaced persons' needs are met, including long-term security, access to social services, adequate housing, livelihoods, personal documentation and access to justice. A more systematic implementation of the Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons promulgated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, as well as other relevant international guidelines, is instrumental in that respect.

Explosive weapons in populated areas

65. The use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in urban and populated areas is of increasing concern. During 2013, almost 38,000 people were reported killed or injured by such weapons, 82 per cent of them civilians. When explosive weapons were used in populated areas, 93 per cent of the casualties were reportedly civilians.[6] In addition to death and injury, civilians are often displaced for long periods and in precarious conditions. Housing, health facilities and essential infrastructure are often damaged or destroyed. Education is also disrupted and

[6] Action on Armed Violence, "Monitoring Explosive Violence 2013" (April 2014).

livelihoods are devastated. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas has a dramatic impact on post-conflict reconstruction. Their remnants are a threat to people, sometimes for generations.

66. Humanitarian actors such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Committee of the Red Cross and many non-governmental organizations, supported by several Member States, have started to address this growing problem through a number of consultations that are aimed at promoting recognition of the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, strengthening the political commitment to address the problem and developing practical measures based on existing good practice.

Humanitarian access

67. Reaching people affected by conflict is not only a prerequisite for effective humanitarian action but gives effect to core principles of international humanitarian law — to save lives and reduce unnecessary and prolonged suffering. Parties to armed conflicts have the primary responsibility to meet the basic needs of civilians in areas under their control. When they fail to do so, impartial humanitarian action becomes necessary to provide the people affected with supplies essential to their survival. The timeliness of humanitarian response is critical to its effectiveness in saving lives. Under international humanitarian law, the consent of parties concerned is required before humanitarian relief actions may be implemented. Parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded access to humanitarian relief for all civilians in need.

68. Denying much-needed assistance or preventing impartial aid organizations from reaching people in need without valid reasons is arbitrary and unjustified. It goes against the very essence of the principle of humanity. In this regard, efforts are under way to engage with Member States, legal experts and humanitarian and civil society actors to clarify the notion of arbitrary withholding of consent from a legal perspective and consider options for providing relevant guidance.

69. In situations of armed conflict, the combination of violence against humanitarian workers, active hostilities and restrictions on movement has severely affected people's access to humanitarian assistance and protection. Bureaucratic impediments can have a serious impact on the speed of a humanitarian response. To allow for an effective response, procedures for the deployment of humanitarian personnel, assets and goods need to be simple and fast. Steps that can be taken by affected Governments to achieve this include reducing delays for customs clearance and visas; lifting restrictions on essential items, including communication and security equipment; removing taxes and fees on relief items and activities; lifting restrictions on in-country movements for humanitarian personnel and goods; and establishing a focal point for legal registration within the country.

70. Good practices and mechanisms are now well established in the context of disasters, such as the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance, adopted at the Thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in Geneva from 26 to 30 November 2007. Member States and humanitarian organizations should explore options to develop similar guidelines and processes consistent with international humanitarian law for conflict settings.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel

71. Humanitarian organizations operating in conflict settings increasingly face serious challenges and restrictions. For example, humanitarian workers are more at risk of direct violence. Preliminary records from the Aid Worker Security Database show that 356 aid workers were killed, kidnapped and seriously wounded in 2013,[7] the highest number ever recorded and an increase of 29 per cent from 2012. The largest proportion of aid workers killed — 56 of 127 killed (44 per cent) — were victims of targeted attacks or crossfire while delivering assistance. Improvised explosive devices and complex attacks accounted for 17 per cent of aid workers killed. More than three quarters of the victims (298 of 356) were national staff, who account for the majority of humanitarian workers.

72. Despite direct attacks against health-care personnel, facilities, vehicles and services being serious violations of international humanitarian law that can constitute war crimes,[8] the reporting period also witnessed an increased number of attacks during vaccination campaigns, as well as numerous intentional attacks on first responders. The deliberate denial of impartial health-care services to civilians and sick and wounded combatants was also observed, including the removal of medical items from aid shipments. This resulted in health-care personnel being unable to adequately address the needs of affected people and to care for the sick and wounded. The obligation to respect and protect health-care personnel, facilities and equipment lies at the core of international humanitarian law. Ensuring that parties to conflict are systematically and effectively held accountable for attacks against humanitarian and health-care personnel is an urgent priority.

Issues to consider going forward

73. The humanitarian community needs to tackle these challenges and continue to consider different ways of offering assistance and protection. New actors have also taken a larger part in humanitarian action and different models of partnerships have arisen, including through reaching people with assistance through cash-transfer programmes and remotely managing operations by utilizing local organizations and partners to deliver international assistance. The advantages and disadvantages of various models involving local and international actors will require further consideration. Humanitarian actors also need to consider issues of diversification; operating in conflict settings cannot follow a "one size fits all" approach. It requires specific skills, sensitivities and the ability to build the necessary trust with local communities and parties to a conflict. The ability to build trust and acceptance also depends on a stay-and-deliver approach that allows humanitarian actors to reach communities in the midst of conflict when it matters most and to stay at their time of greatest need.

D. Humanitarian effectiveness

74. In recent years, a variety of reform efforts have worked to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action, including the Inter-Agency Standing

[7] As at 21 April 2014; the figures for 2013 have not been finalized.

[8] Health-care personnel, facilities, transports and services lose their protection under international humanitarian law when they commit, or are used to commit, acts harmful to the enemy.

Committee transformative agenda, the creation of professional standards for humanitarian actors, implementation of good donor practices and principles and the development of humanitarian standards and certification schemes for the provision of assistance. Steps taken to improve humanitarian financing through pooled funds have also enhanced the timeliness and flexibility of humanitarian funding. At the same time, Member States — affected countries and donors — and humanitarian organizations have recognized the need for a more profound review and improvements to the way humanitarian assistance is being delivered to meet the challenges of a changing global landscape and to respond more effectively, and with more sustainable results, to humanitarian crises. While efforts to date have helped to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action, they have largely focused inwardly, that is, on the effectiveness of the existing international humanitarian response system.

75. In looking forward, the analysis of what is effective needs to extend beyond the international humanitarian system. It will need to recognize the different perspectives and comparative advantages of the various actors responding to a humanitarian crisis, including affected people and their governments at local and national levels, first responders, diaspora and civil society groups and the business community. Continuing to consider the context and the phase of a response will also matter. It will be further necessary to anticipate how emerging trends and challenges such as technology, the growth of middle-income countries and their own capacities, new partners and increasing needs and inequalities will change the way the needs of people affected by crises will be met in the future.

Different perspectives on effectiveness

76. It is the primary responsibility of the national and local authorities of the country affected to meet the needs of people affected by a crisis, whether in conflict or natural disaster settings. While international humanitarian organizations have a critical role to play, it is recognized that an effective response increasingly depends on the successful interplay of multiple actors in a humanitarian emergency. These other actors include first responders, civil society, national and foreign militaries, bilateral or regional governmental support, various private sector organizations (multinational, national and local) and diaspora communities, among others. Understanding their perspectives as to what they consider effective humanitarian action — their knowledge of the situation and the needs of people affected; how to respond and over what time period — is important to providing a more holistic picture of what constitutes effectiveness.

77. It is critical for all actors involved in a humanitarian response to understand what affected people, communities and countries need and what they are doing to meet their own needs, and how they can support these efforts and connect with them rather than duplicate or replace them. During and after any humanitarian crisis, people from the community and local organizations are the first responders and will be the most likely to have direct access to people in need and remain there to support recovery. National and local responders are more likely to work with existing infrastructure and markets, improving the sustainability of response efforts. Therefore, a key element of making overall humanitarian action more effective is the effectiveness of local and national humanitarian responses and understanding how other actors can complement and strengthen local and national response capacity. For example, diaspora groups, with their expertise and funding, may

sometimes be able to contribute faster and more directly than national or international entities.

78. Given the diverse range of actors engaged in responding to an emergency, when considering what constitutes effective humanitarian action, it will be less important who is delivering the assistance than how well the needs of people are being met. This will require recognition of the various actors, networks and systems and a wider understanding and respect for their comparative advantages, motivations and limitations. To achieve this, more investment is needed — outside of crises — to increase the interoperability of these different actors, including by developing predictable platforms for engagement, cooperation and coordination and a focused discussion around common objectives, standards and delivery methods with each of them.

79. These discussions will need to consider how international agencies can better connect with and support the increasing number of national disaster management authorities and national disaster response plans; how private sector interests can be reconciled with international standards of delivery and public sector donations; how to resolve tensions that arise from needing to provide life-saving assistance in conflict settings by engaging with all parties to a conflict, while at the same time contributing to longer-term government priorities on resilience and capacity-building; and how to work with actors outside the existing governmental or international response frameworks to develop common goals and standards. In the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will prepare a study to examine humanitarian effectiveness from different perspectives.

Context of the crisis

80. How the effectiveness of humanitarian action is measured will also depend on the context in which the emergency is taking place and the capacity and enabling environment established by the host Government or by parties to a conflict. For example, in natural disaster or chronic vulnerability settings, the capacity of local and national governments is critical for the effectiveness of the overall response. Humanitarian agencies need to work closely with these authorities in support of their efforts. However, in a conflict setting, the effectiveness of humanitarian action may depend less on the capacity of the Government, particularly where it is a party to a conflict, and more on the ability of international humanitarian agencies to engage with all parties to the conflict, based on humanitarian principles, to reach people and meet the life-saving and protection needs of the affected population.

Emerging trends and challenges

81. Humanitarian effectiveness also needs to be considered within the changing nature of the humanitarian landscape. Middle-income countries are taking greater ownership and leadership in responding to crises within their own countries, deploying increased economic and institutional capabilities. International and national corporations and local businesses are more engaged in humanitarian response. With the increased use of direct cash transfers to affected people — and growing technological and scientific advances — there are more opportunities than ever to meet the needs of affected people.

82. This is a critical time to assess what constitutes effective humanitarian action. The extent to which the international humanitarian system adapts to the changing realities, recognizing the multiplicity of options and actors, highlighting its own comparative advantages and offering to be a broker of solutions to affected Governments and people, will be critical to closing capacity and delivery gaps, strengthening global support for humanitarian action and more effectively meeting the needs of the most vulnerable.

V. Recommendations

83. On the basis of the above, the Secretary-General recommends the following:

(a) Member States, non-State actors and humanitarian organizations should continue to promote greater respect for and adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence;

(b) Member States and, where applicable, non-State actors should adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, including by allowing and facilitating the rapid and unimpeded access of humanitarian relief to affected persons in need, and recognize that such consent must not be arbitrarily withheld;

(c) Member States and, where applicable, non-State actors should adhere to their obligation to respect and protect humanitarian and health-care personnel, their transports and facilities, including by pursuing all domestic and international options to ensure accountability for all attacks in contravention of relevant international law;

(d) Member States, United Nations entities and civil society organizations should continue to promote recognition of the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, strengthen the political commitment to address the problem and develop practical measures based on existing good practice;

(e) Member States should make further efforts to simplify and expedite procedures for the deployment of humanitarian personnel and goods, including by exploring means of adapting the good practices and mechanisms developed in the context of natural disasters to other types of crises, including conflict and chronic vulnerability settings;

(f) Member States, United Nations actors and humanitarian organizations should continue to work together to ensure that people are protected from harm and their rights upheld before and during a crisis, including by understanding the different protection needs of different people, particularly the most vulnerable, and ensuring that these needs are adequately integrated into preparedness, response, and recovery efforts;

(g) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should strengthen their efforts to ensure better protection, assistance and development strategies for internally displaced persons, including through working together to strengthen the implementation of the Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons promulgated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee; and humanitarian organizations should improve coordination to better

address the needs of internally displaced persons, recognizing the central role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator;

(h) The United Nations and humanitarian organizations should continue efforts to strengthen needs analysis and strategic planning to ensure a better informed, more effective, transparent and collective response to the needs of people affected by crises;

(i) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian actors should continue to identify, understand and analyse the distinct needs, challenges and coping capacities of women, girls, boys and men, including by improving the disaggregation of sex-, age- and disability-specific data during collation and their use in analysis and programme planning; strengthening the participation of all affected women, girls, boys and men in decision-making structures; and consistently utilizing the gender marker and other monitoring tools to improve gender and age analysis and track funding allocations;

(j) Member States should strengthen leadership and commitment to preventing and mitigating humanitarian crises by, inter alia, integrating risk management into national development plans, increasing funding for crisis prevention and mitigation and basing funding decisions on risk analysis to ensure that funding supports the people and countries at highest risk of crises;

(k) Humanitarian and development organizations should continue to strengthen efforts to overcome institutional barriers to working together by, inter alia, planning on the basis of a common analysis of risk, aligning planning cycles where possible and employing tools and processes to jointly analyse crisis risk;

(l) The United Nations and humanitarian organizations, together with development organizations, should continue to support national leadership in building in-country preparedness capacity, including under the Common Framework for Preparedness of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the United Nations Development Group and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction;

(m) The United Nations and humanitarian organizations should continue efforts to map emergency preparedness and response capacities of affected countries, including their Governments and civil society, private sector and other relevant actors, in order to better understand how the international community can build upon and complement existing local and national capacities;

(n) The United Nations and humanitarian organizations should identify best practices and new opportunities to enhance interoperability between affected Governments, community responders, civil society, diaspora groups, humanitarian organizations, the private sector and other providers of bilateral and multilateral assistance to address capacity and resource gaps and meet the needs of affected people more effectively;

(o) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should continue to promote innovation within the humanitarian sector by increasing investment in research, development and evaluation of new approaches to aid delivery and by reviewing policies that may contribute to unintended barriers to innovation, including humanitarian financing and procurement guidelines.